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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000259

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DOE FOR CAROLYN GAY

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TAGS: PREL PGOV KDEM NI

SUBJECT: LAGOS GOVERNOR SAYS ELECTIONS PREPARATION IS
NON-EXISTENT

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Classified By: Consul General Brian L. Browne for reasons 1.4 (b and d)

¶1. (C) Summary: In an April 9 meeting with the Consul General, Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu said the Independent Electoral Commission's (INEC) preparations for the April 14 gubernatorial elections in Lagos State were essentially non-existent. He claimed the People's Democratic Party (PDP) planned to rig the election. He suggested President Obasanjo's strategy was to cause sufficient chaos in the gubernatorial elections to establish a pretext for postponing the presidential elections. In spite of grave problems with the electoral process, Tinubu stated the important thing was to achieve an outcome that reflected political reality to a significant degree. Tinubu could accept a result that gave the PDP more victories than a fair election would warrant but one where opposition strongholds -- such as Lagos and Kano States -- were respected. Tinubu said he would advise Vice President Atiku to back the PDP's Yar'Adua so as not to give the President another rationale to delay the presidential elections. End summary.

INEC Is Woefully Unprepared

¶2. (C) In an April 9 meeting with the Consul General, Lagos State Governor Bola Tinubu said the Independent Electoral Commission's (INEC) preparations for the April 14 gubernatorial elections were woeful. Voter registration lists had not been published and were likely non-existent, INEC had not hired staff, and the commission had not begun to set up polling locations. Moreover, no one has seen a sample of the actual ballots nor had ballot boxes been sighted, decried Tinubu. As a result, he concluded, there was no chance the gubernatorial election would be credible. Tinubu was told by State Security Service (SSS) contacts that many of the ballot boxes that would be delivered to polling locations would already have been stuffed with executed ballots. Furthermore, there had been a recent shake-up in the police hierarchy,

where promotions were given to those who vowed to participate in manipulating the vote.

Obasanjo Is Maneuvering To Postpone The Presidential Election

¶3. (C) Tinubu alleged President Obasanjo's plan was to hold gubernatorial elections on the 14th. However, once all the problems came to light, Obasanjo would postpone the presidential election, ostensibly in order to prepare adequately. This ploy would allow Obasanjo to remain in office while existing governors and the Vice President would leave office, offered Tinubu. Obasanjo then would be free to prosecute the Vice President and those governors Obasanjo considered adversarial, as they would have been shorn of constitutional immunity. Tinubu saw this as a personal vendetta by Obasanjo to make those who rankled him pay dearly for his displeasure. However, he said Obasanjo would meet stiffer than expected resistance: some of the governors, himself included, were ready to counter Obasanjo strongly, thus implying public demonstrations and civil disobedience that could degenerate into something more coarse.

¶4. (C) Implicit in Tinubu's scenario is that the People's Democratic Party (PDP) intended on "winning" too many gubernatorial seats, including places where the PDP is weak. This would create grave problems, warned Tinubu. However, he continued, if the PDP played its cards wisely, it would allow the Action Congress (AC), All Nigeria People's Party (ANPP), and All Progressive Grand Alliance (APGA) to win in places where those parties were strong. This would allow the PDP to retain an ample majority of gubernatorial seats without provoking strong reactions from opposition parties, suggested Tinubu. The presidential election could then take place unimpeded. The AC following in the South would not cause a stir if the PDP's Yar'Adua won in a tilted exercise, Tinubu

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postulated.

Tinubu Rejects AC, ANPP Alliance

¶5. (C) Tinubu stressed he had no qualms about PDP presidential candidate Umaru Yar'Adua winning the election. Yet, Tinubu was adamantly opposed to ANPP presidential candidate Muhammadu Buhari. In a recent news story, Buhari called the PDP government 'fascist'. Tinubu sarcastically mentioned that he would take Buhari's epithet as being accurate, for who better to identify a fascist than another one.

¶6. (C) Tinubu vociferously opposed an AC-ANPP alliance. There was virtually no chance Vice President and AC presidential candidate Atiku Abubakar would be allowed to run for office, said Tinubu. Obasanjo would simply not permit it. Thus, Tinubu planned to ask Atiku to admit defeat gracefully and support Yar'Adua. This would eliminate excuses for President Obasanjo to extend his time in office. The immediate goal, argued Tinubu, was to get Obasanjo out of office. Once Yar'Adua was in the presidential seat, Obasanjo's influence would wane quickly. Although the electoral process would be gross, the end result in that case would be digestible as long as the opposition parties won enough gubernatorial slots as well.

Comment

¶7. (C) Tinubu is clearheaded about the quality of elections preparations. Short of providential intervention, there is little chance INEC will be adequately prepared to conduct elections in Lagos State and other states in Southern Nigeria

we have recently visited (septels). Tinubu is also likely correct in that the political elite, including members of the opposition, would accept a flawed process as long as the results somewhat reflected political realities. For Tinubu, those realities are that Obasanjo's unpopularity and his vindictiveness mean that the President should not remain in office one moment beyond the May 29 term expiry and that opposition parties should see a net gain in the gubernatorial seats although the PDP could maintain a majority. However, Tinubu does not expect that this will be the result. If it is not, there will likely be some level of disturbance in places where the opposition is strong yet the electoral outcome did not reflect opposition puissance.

¶8. (C) With regard to Atiku supporting Yar'Adua, this seems a tough sell. It would require Atiku sacrificing his pride and position for what Tinubu sees as an overall strategic good. It has been unusual for any of the major politicians to place the common good over their own ambitions; we see no reason why Atiku would break this trend at this late date. End comment.

BROWNE